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# **Evaluating efforts to enhance health and wellbeing in Scottish secondary schools**

## **Abstract**

Curriculum for Excellence in Scotland outlines a policy vision of a more progressive, integrated and holistic form of education; a commitment which contains an obligation for health and wellbeing to be a responsibility of all teachers. A critical policy analysis approach was utilised in order to review school level progress in different stages of policy development i.e., policy formulation, legitimisation, implementation and evaluation. Evidence was collected through 15 semi-structured interviews with head teachers, teacher education academics and staff with national and local authority quality improvement remits. Questions focused on: aims and curriculum goals; school culture; learning and teaching; partnership relationships and evaluations of practice. Findings suggest a high degree of support for curriculum aims, however there were often problems communicating policy expectations (policy formulation). Thus, despite impressive examples of innovative practice in relation to school ethos, wider achievement and pupils' broader general education (policy legitimisation), there were also examples of health and wellbeing being constrained by senior school examinations and the backwash effect this had on curriculum planning and engagement with interdisciplinary learning approaches (policy implementation/evaluation). These findings have implications in terms of policy to practice coherence as well as highlighting the need for further more specific research evaluations.

**Key words:** curriculum enrichment; health and wellbeing; policy formulation; learning and teaching; policy evaluation.

## Introduction

In recent years there has been an increased expectation that schools can be a pivotal force for good in helping young people's lives to become more fulfilling and meaningful (White, 2011). The endorsement for health and wellbeing (HWB) **as part of the overall Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) national framework** in Scotland, for example, reflects an interest in the development and wider achievement of the whole child and of aspirations to replicate a Scandinavian-type model of public policy where there is an on-going commitment to comprehensive schooling and to all pupils (Lingard, 2008). The Scottish context is broadly comparable to New Zealand (Soutter, O'Steen and Gilmore, 2012) as both countries emphasise the value of school subjects alongside a partial engagement with the therapeutic culture ambitions which are a concern of supra national bodies with an interest in equity, health, social justice and the emotional wellbeing of young people (Layard & Dunn, 2009). However, there are differences in HWB policy definition across Anglophone countries. For example, in England, wellbeing as part of personal and social education is a non-statutory component of National Curriculum plans which schools are expected to embed across curriculum areas. This is relative to 'Citizenship' which is a compulsory part of the curriculum and focuses on improving understanding of: Democracy and Justice; Rights and Responsibilities and Identities and Diversity (Department for Education, 2013). Again, in Australia, preparations for their first ever national curriculum adopt a seven-fold capabilities-type approach (Nussbaum, 2000) as a device for enhancing cross-curriculum learning and teaching. The closest of the seven areas to wellbeing - personal and social capability - **is underpinned by a focus on personal capacities such as managing emotions and developing empathy for others and social dimensions such as working effectively in teams in often challenging contexts (Australian Curriculum, 2016a). In addition, within health and physical education, mental health and wellbeing is an area of focus across all six age-related stages of development in the new Foundation to Year 10 curriculum (Australian Curriculum, 2016b).** Quite how this mix of influences is enacted is open to some conjecture as curriculum development in these areas is likely

to be ‘complex and contested and will play out differently in different contexts’ (Penney, 2013, p. 190). This is perhaps additionally so in Australia where national ambitions need to articulate with state **and territory** based responsibilities for curriculum implementation.

Despite many English speaking countries having heightened (if somewhat varied) aspirations towards improving the quality of pupils HWB experiences, there are as yet, few evaluations of how policy intentions have been taken forward in practice. With this in mind, the paper aims to help by linking a chronological review of policy development in Scotland with a methodology which is informed by a six stage policy cycle framework (Cairney, 2012) and interview-based evidence from a sample of key policy stakeholders. This research approach will enable a more nuanced and finer grained evaluation of policy and practice successes and limitations to take place.

### **Research approach, research questions and research critique**

In taking this remit forward, the paper utilizes a critical policy analysis approach (Cairney, 2012), where four of the six main stages of the policy cycle (policy formulation, legitimization, implementation and evaluation) are analysed in order to better understand Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) and HWB as part of public policy in Scotland. The two other stages of the policy cycle i.e., agenda setting and policy maintenance are of a lesser focus but are briefly considered as these areas contribute to ongoing cycles of policy-based enquiry. Cairney (2012, p. 4) notes that while the ‘policy process is complex, messy and often appears to be unpredictable ... there are well-established ways to make sense of the process as a whole’. A common way to aid understanding is to treat the policy process, as a cycle comprising certain key stages that enable notional start and end points to be identified - in this instance through identifying the origins of HWB as a national priority (Scottish Executive, 2006b) and the aspects for school development (Education Scotland’s, 2013b) as an end point in the first cycle of HWB policy. This approach enables the evaluation of a policy cycle to become part of an ongoing critical analysis.

### ***Research questions***

Relative to the six areas of the policy cycle (Cairney, 2012) research questions focus on:

- what level of engagement has there been with CfE? (agenda setting)
- have ideas about HWB risen in prominence during the development of CfE? (policy formulation)
- to what extent do teachers consider that HWB should be a responsibility for all teachers? (policy legitimization)
- are schools taking forward policy aims and responding to aspects of development requiring attention? (policy implementation)
- how are schools evaluating their HWB programmes? (policy evaluation)
- should CfE be maintained, succeeded or terminated? (policy maintenance)

These policy-related questions reflect recent research in implementing learner-centred curriculum, which contain a focus on HWB. For example, in terms of agenda setting, Priestley and Minty (2013) cite evidence of there being a high level of first order engagement with the main ideas and general founding principles of CfE. However, the same authors found less evidence of second order engagement i.e., congruence between theories of learning and teaching sympathetic to CfE aims and teachers pedagogical beliefs and abilities (policy formulation). This matters in terms of HWB, for as Bok (2010) highlights, teachers are not generally well positioned to provide experiences that help pupils lead more satisfying lives, as most secondary school teachers are not sufficiently expert in psychology to evaluate pupils' wellbeing. This creates further dilemmas (policy legitimization) especially if policy guidance is written in a particularly streamlined way which may prove difficult for teachers to operationalise (e.g., Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2009a). Furthermore, in terms of policy implementation, Ecclestone (2013) has concerns that the general privileging of personal

wellbeing dispositions under CfE could undermine the importance of subject knowledge and alter the ways in which teachers interpret curriculum reforms and relate to pupils.

### ***Research critique***

The decision to take forward a critical policy analysis approach based on the policy cycle was made after reviewing a number of other possible theoretical frameworks designed to simplify understanding of the policy making process e.g., institutional rational choice approach, policy diffusion models, punctuated equilibrium theory and/or advocacy coalition frameworks (Jann & Wegrich, 2007). Cairney (2009) has done likewise and when researching the HWB related area of tobacco control in the United Kingdom utilised Kingdon's (1995) multiple streams analysis to review the contrast policy conditions in each country, and the ways in which various windows of opportunity enabled new ideas to be articulated and accepted. Cairney (2009, p. 482), found in Scotland that it was 'difficult to disentangle' policy transfer ideas from internal politics, especially as politicians were keen to trump each other in order to highlight how devolution was making a constructive difference in Scotland.

Therefore, in considering the perceived strengths and limitations of the policy cycle, there is recognition that there is a tension between those who see the potential of the policy cycle to 'capture some of the fundamental features of current policy formulation, including the existence of numerous decision makers (and) the high degree of competition and contestability among sources of policy advice' (Howard, 2005, p. 3) and those who are more inclined to consider the model has outlasted its usefulness and should be replaced by more advanced models (Sabatier & Weible, 2014). This latter view is largely predicated on the belief that policy cycles overly rely on separating out the policy process into discrete stages, contain an implicit top-down perspective, lack descriptive adequacy and fail to reflect the complexities of policy making (Jann & Wegrich, 2007). These sentiments are largely shared in an educational context by Ball, Maguire and Braun (2012)

who argue that the production of policy texts often marginalises school level engagement with policy interactions. Consequently, Ball et al., (2012) argue that changes and reforms in secondary schooling can be better understood if the focus is on school-based policy enactment rather than the detail of policy implementation guidelines. Approaching research in this way enables consideration to be taken of the ‘overall texture and rhythms of teachers’ work - the different times of year in schools and the deadening tiredness with which teachers often grapple’ (Ball et al., 2012, p. 5). There is no particular disagreement on this point, however as the research in this paper contains a focus on policy formulation and legitimisation as well as policy implementation and evaluation, and involves collecting evidence from a wide range of key policy stakeholders (i.e., head teachers, teacher education academics and staff with national and local authority quality improvement remits), the research position taken reflects Howard’s (2005, p. 4) view that policy cycles if interpreted broadly can ‘capture the existence of multiple players, the pluralism in sources of policy advice, and the extensive feedback loops that influence new policy initiatives.’

### **Historical background and context of Curriculum for Excellence in Scotland**

Reflecting the rebirth of progressive education ideas which is evident across many parts of the Anglophone world, Scotland made use of its post 1999 devolved governmental powers to update curriculum aims and address worrying health statistics (Thorburn, 2014). CfE is based on developing four generic learning capacities; namely, for young people to become ‘successful learners’, ‘confident individuals’, ‘effective contributors’ and ‘responsible citizens’. These capacities are not unique to Scotland - for example, the five capabilities used in the New Zealand national curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007) could plausibly map onto the four CfE capacities: e.g., thinking and using language, symbols and texts (successful learner); managing self (confident individual); relating to others (responsible citizen) and participating and contributor (effective communicator). Health and wellbeing (HWB) occupies a prominent CfE role, and is along with literacy and numeracy one of three key responsibilities of all teachers, plus a subject

responsibility for those teachers who have an enhanced HWB remit (Scottish Executive, 2006b).

Therefore, HWB has a dual curriculum role: a minority of subject teachers (i.e., personal and social education, physical education and home economics teachers) have an explicit teaching ‘about’ HWB remit while *all* teachers have a teaching ‘for’ HWB remit, where evidence of HWB’s importance across learning is part of their wider professional contribution. These ambitions exist within an overall CfE framework that encourages teachers to make full use of their increased professional autonomy and decision-making responsibilities when reviewing their curriculum plans and pedagogical intentions (Scottish Government, 2008).

CfE guidance predominantly focusses on how broad declarations of ambition can be realised within a more tightly defined experiences-and-outcomes based curriculum framework. Drawing upon Kelly’s (1999) theorizing on the need to acknowledge the planning considerations which underpin curriculum ideologies, Priestley and Humes (2010) conclude that CfE is not the process-based curriculum it purports to be, but rather it is fundamentally a mastery curriculum where the retention of curriculum areas supports the status quo in schools. In this guise, CfE is representative of a style of policy making where neo-liberalist interests continue to be pursued under a new progressive education pretext (Priestley, 2011). Surrounding these concerns is a claimed crisis in current curriculum theory, where a loss of focus on subject knowledge in learning and teaching and a downgrading in teachers instrumental function i.e., that parents ‘send their children to school expecting them to acquire the specialist knowledge that they would not have access to at home’ is evident (Young, 2013, p.107). These imperatives (retention of subjects and concerns for knowledge informed teaching) could lead to teachers manipulating existing practices to fit new programme arrangements rather than engaging in a more thorough review of learner-centered planning and practice (Thorburn, 2014). Furthermore, McLaren (2013, p. 427) notes within HWB arrangements, that attempts to provide universal personal support for young people contains ‘very little in the way of advice, information and help as to how a school might impose some kind of structure in all of



this', with these limitations being particularly prevalent in secondary schools. Porciani (2013) also notes that teachers are seeking greater pedagogical guidance on matters such as active pupil engagement and interdisciplinary and integrated learning at the same time as national organizations expect teachers to take on greater responsibility for their teaching practices.

### ***Health and wellbeing policy in Scotland***

Prior to the launch of CfE in 2011-2012, policy attention focused on articulating how the four capacities could be developed (agenda setting) through familiar subject areas and new curriculum themes such as HWB. A feature of early documentation is its general lack of specific definition of what precisely is meant by HWB. Arguably, the closest to a precise definition are the following two bolded sentences which state that: 'Learning through health and wellbeing promotes confidence, independent thinking and positive attitudes and dispositions. Because of this, it is the responsibility of every teacher to contribute to learning and development in this area' (Scottish Executive, 2006b, p. 10). The requirement for schools to engage more with health-enhancing life skills builds on Scotland's post devolution interest in improving HWB. For example, the Scottish Health Promoting Schools Unit outlined that by 2007 all schools had to embed health promotion into their curriculum and in 2008, HWB was identified as one of the main measures by which CfE would be better able to meet the educational outcomes of all young people (Scottish Government, 2008). In 2009, Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS), a public body organization responsible for the development and support of the Scottish curriculum (prior to its merger with HMIE to form 'Education Scotland' in 2011), issued principles and practice advice for all teachers to consider as part of their remit (LTS, 2009a). The four pages of support notes (policy formulation) outline through a blend of aspirational and entitlement statements what the general expectations of teachers are in terms of HWB e.g., teachers are advised that their responsibilities include 'establishing open, positive, supportive relationships across the school community, where children and young people will feel that they are listened to, and where they feel secure in their ability to discuss sensitive aspects of

their lives ...’ (LTS, 2009a, p. 2). This approach to writing policy led to McLaren (2013, p. 431) considering that the responsibility for all commitment ‘is over-simplistic and, unless there is some further consideration of roles and remits, it will become the responsibility of no-one’ (policy legitimisation).

The experiences and outcomes for HWB were set out in more detail in 2009 (LTS 2009b). The six areas of HWB (covering 51 experiences and outcomes) are: Mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing; Planning for choices and changes; Physical education, physical activity and sport; Food and health; Substance misuse and Relationships, sexual health and parenthood. The links to subject areas are most immediately identifiable in the last four of the six areas. The first two areas are more generic in nature and represent the newest of the challenges for *all* teachers in terms of supporting their school environment, promoting positive behaviour and encouraging pupils to make informed choices about their HWB. Unlike the vast majority of other subject areas (and literacy and numeracy across learning), many of the HWB outcomes are repeated verbatim across the five stages of development identified in the earlier construction of CfE (Scottish Executive, 2006a). It is arguable whether the experience and outcome statements articulate closely with the wider societal ambitions (policy implementation) emphasized through the ‘Getting it Right for Every Child’ (GIRFEC) programme (Scottish Executive, 2006c); the broad equivalent of the ‘Every Child Matters’ programme in England and Wales or the eight SHANARRI indicators (Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible and Included) which were outlined as being the responsibility of *all* teachers as part of their HWB remit (Thorburn, 2014). Figure 1 outlines how the four CfE capacities are designed to dovetail with the SHANARRI indicators as part of the shared vision, common goal and main generic purposes of HWB (LTS, 2009b).

*Enter Figure 1 close to here*

Reform Scotland (2013), a Scottish-based public policy institute, is generally disappointed with CfE policy documents (policy evaluation), as they insufficiently focus on: the new challenges of interdisciplinary learning; the difficulties of advancing personalisation and choice and of producing better quality experiences and outcomes. With regard to HWB specifically, progression was of concern with it being considered unfortunate that the outcomes ‘relating to the responsibilities of all teachers for HWB almost entirely lack progression of any kind ... (before noting that) ... there is no reason why the weaker examples cannot be replaced or improved’ (Reform Scotland, 2013, p. 15). The cultivation of more sharply focussed progressive outcomes on HWB might allay the monitoring of standards concerns of the OECD (2007) who note that ‘the Scottish Government does not have reliable information on the extent to which educational standards are being reached in each of the 32 local authorities ... (and that without this) ... there is a risk that greater autonomy could lead to greater variability’ (OECD, 2007, p. 18). They recommend that ‘policy instruments should be adopted which set down clear expectations about improvement in student opportunities and outcomes are backed by a comprehensive survey and monitoring programme which furnishes reliable data to the Scottish Government, local authorities, and schools’ (OECD, 2007, p. 18). Not everyone however is convinced that producing better outcome statements and more closely supervising standards is the route to take with HWB. McLaren (2013, p. 430) has an unease about whether in light of comprehensive school aspirations HWB should be regarded as ‘more of a process than a curricular area to be achieved’. Reeves (2013, p. 69) is also concerned that pupils will end up ‘parroting phrases provided for them’ with notions of learner-centredness being effectively ‘hollowed out by the removal of the child’s agency.’

In 2013, Education Scotland published two reports on ‘Health and wellbeing: the responsibility of all 3-18’; the first an extended report of current practice (Education Scotland, 2013a) informed by visits to four secondary schools, inspection reports, professional dialogue and wider reading and a second shorter impact report (Education Scotland, 2013b) which summarised 17 key strengths and 18 aspects for development. These come under the headings of: culture (supportive ethos and high

quality relationships); systems (shared focus, improving outcomes) and practice (sense of teamwork and productive environments) which require review. This more extended approach towards policy guidance contrasts with the more streamlined approach initially used e.g., LTS (2009a). However, these education policy messages are consistent with the move across a range of public health services to utilize asset (or strengths)-based approaches as a more effective way of helping people to identify the factors which can enhance their lives (Scottish Government, 2012).

## **Methodology**

The research was informed by the interpretive research paradigm with evidence collected through a series of 15 semi-structured interviews with head teachers, teacher education academics and staff with national and local authority remits for quality improvement (**QIS**) i.e., five interviews with each category of interviewee on a one interview per interviewee basis. The interpretive paradigm examines experiences and perceptions of reality by asking interviewees to make sense of their world and their occupational contexts (Silverman, 2006). An interview framework which utilized a critical policy analysis approach, informed by Cairney's (2012) theorizing on public policy, was adopted. Stages in the policy cycle were connected to 11 lead question areas which in turn articulated with the 'Culture', 'Systems' and 'Practice' headings used in Education Scotland's (2013b) reporting on HWB i.e., 'culture' connects to agenda setting, policy formulation and legitimization, 'systems' with policy implementation and 'practice' with policy evaluation and maintenance (Table 1). Follow up questions were informed by: reviews of the major policy documents which specifically focus on HWB in CfE e.g., Scottish Executive (2006a); LTS (2009a); Education Scotland's (2013b); general academic reviews of CfE e.g., Priestley and Humes (2010) and by research articles which focus on HWB in Scotland e.g., Thorburn (2014).

*Enter Table 1 close to here*

## **Procedures**

Due to the aforementioned concerns on the challenges which exist for HWB in secondary schools (McLaren, 2013; Porciani, 2013), the paper predominantly focuses on secondary school contexts (i.e., for pupils of 12-18 years). The author conducted all interviews on a one-to-one basis with interviewees during the final quarter of 2014. The aim was to engage interviewees in structured but relatively open conversations which allowed scope for extended answers that covered the broad range of supplementary questions exemplified in Table 1, and which also reflected the particular professional roles interviewees held. Interviewees provided written permission to record interviews and interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes. Each interviewee was provided with a guarantee that they would not be named in subsequent reporting. These procedures are consistent with British Educational Research Association ethical guidelines for completing professional interviews with the relevant University also providing ethical approval for the research.

### ***Participants***

In making sampling decisions about which professionals to interview it was decided to predominantly focus on interviewees who were pivotal to introducing, implementing and reviewing CfE but who were not members of national policy groups. This approach enabled the majority of interviewees to reflect on their engagement with CfE from 2004 to 2014 without being encumbered by their direct involvement in the policy construction process. To counteract the possible downside of this approach (e.g., in terms of lack of clarity and accuracy in recalling the development of policy), one academic interviewed was a member of many of the national policy groups between 2004 and 2010. To determine how many interviews to conduct the data saturation principles advocated by Francis et al., (2010) when completing theory-based interview studies were utilized. Following an initial four interviews in each interviewee category (head teacher, academics and QIS) a predictive stopping criterion was identified after which it was anticipated that no new or particularly atypical findings were likely to emerge. On this basis, it was considered that one further interview was necessary with each category of interviewee. This process confirmed that no

major new or contrasting issues were appearing, and as such 15 interviews were completed. For the interviews a snowball stratified method of sampling was used. Therefore, after the first interviewee within each category was chosen based on previous author contact, future interviewees were identified through successive chain-referral recommendations. This method was considered preferable to selecting a random sample of interviewees (Noy, 2008). However, in order to overtake concerns that this method of sampling might result in interviewees suggesting other interviewees with similar attitudes, recommendations had to fulfil either of the three occupational positional criteria i.e., that nominated interviewees were either a secondary school head teacher, teacher education academics or national and local authority employee with a QIS remit (Tansey, 2007). Table 2 provides summary information on all interviewees - their current remit, years in post, age and gender. The system of coding used in Table 2 also enables each interviewee to be individually identified in later discussion. All fifteen interviewees began their careers as secondary school teachers.

*Enter Table 2 close to here*

### ***Data analysis***

In completing a comprehensive interpretive analysis of interviews, transcripts were carefully transcribed and listened to in order to ensure accuracy of meaning (Silverman, 2006). Thereafter, multiple readings allowed patterns and relationships relevant to the Scottish HWB policy literature and the analytical framework for discussion i.e., as defined by Cairney's (2012) policy cycle to be recognized. This methodology enabled themes to emerge from the data (Charmaz, 2006) as well as being informed by the policy cycle stages (agenda setting, policy formulation, policy legitimization, policy implementation, policy evaluation and policy maintenance) theorized by Cairney (2012); a strategy which confirmed that the descriptive themes identified were interpreted accurately during data analysis (Maxwell, 2013). Adopting this open-coding approach ensured that key themes were

not accepted as static but problematized in order that the probing and reviewing of key themes was ongoing as data collection and analysis occurred concurrently. This approach enabled conflicting views to be represented within analysis of the policy cycle rather than rejected as they were not consistent with the main thrust of interviewees' reflections (Corbin & Strauss, 2007). Silverman (2006, p. 387) recommends this approach as being a fertile one due to the 'mutual and interactive' benefits accruing. For example, when reviewing policy implementation matters (Table 1), the coding of interview themes was informed both by responses to leading questions on curriculum reorganisation and effective learning and teaching strategies, as well as by matters raised by interviewees. In this instance, this enabled the open coding of interviews to highlight head teachers concerns on teacher workload and the tensions existing between implementing programmes for the lower secondary school years relative to those for the senior school years. As a result, the coding process was helpful in finding relationships in the data through a continuous process of comparison (Greener, 2011).

## **Perspectives on health and wellbeing in Scottish secondary schools**

### ***Policy agenda***

There was across interviewees a positive response to the announcement of CfE aims. The paired down approach to curriculum, where there was a focus on broad principles following the National Debate on education in 2002, was welcomed as an interesting and refreshing starting point. The four capacities informing CfE were popular. Nevertheless, CfE's launch coincided with a busy policy period and this led to there being a delay in reviewing the size and scope of the initiative. This often resulted in making practical connections with the aims of CfE with inadequate time being available for wider shared discussions on the educational principles informing CfE. Therefore, in policy terms, there was a common understanding and consensus on the broad benefits of CfE, even though professional expectations had yet to be fully teased out.

### *Policy formulation*

While there was a high level of support for CfE aims, the brevity of the policy advice offered was considered by many as naive and optimistic, as the lack of detail resulted in to many questions remaining unanswered and variability in initial engagement. As one head teacher (HT4, 6/11/14) noted, some started to experiment immediately and ‘to think creatively about what they were doing ... (while) ... the entrenched majority were waiting for what turned into the experiences and outcomes.’ There was also some interviewee unease about the role of HMIE/Education Scotland, as they were considered to have been unsuccessful in communicating their allegiance to CfE. This was evident through their support for subject areas (Scottish Executive, 2006b) and their perceived lack of commitment in endorsing wider achievement agendas e.g., one academic (TEA3, 05/11/14) was concerned that the Duke of Edinburgh awards were not yet recognised as being comparable with achievement in traditional senior school examinations. There was also unease with the **sequencing** of policy with concerns raised that the review of teacher education in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2011) should have commenced sooner relative to the announcement of CfE (Scottish Executive, 2004), so that new teachers were fully familiar with the vision of CfE planned. Without this occurring, there is a danger of the assessment of achievement e.g., results from OECD measures such as Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) continuing to shape reforms relative to more fundamental changes in learning and teaching taking place. Nevertheless, many interviewees reported that CfE did enable constructive whole school dialogue to take place about pupils’ journey, the development of their skills and abilities, and of how these could develop within a **Broad General Education (BGE)** phase which covered the first three years of secondary schooling i.e., for pupils of 12-15 years. As one QIS noted ‘the smart thing at the start of CfE was not talking about what we are doing but how and why we are doing it’ (LAQI1, 08/10/14).

The rise in policy prominence for HWB was considered to have been as a consequence of Scotland’s political embarrassment about the state of people’s health for which the Scottish



Government now had an extra (devolved government) responsibility. The commissioned literature review under CfE was considered relatively helpful in setting out an assets-based approach to HWB, whereby the four capacities could best be achieved if the child is healthy, emotionally secure and psychologically at ease with themselves. However, as the academic who was a participant on the policy making groups noted (TEA2, 09/10/14), taking forward this perspective was not without notable challenges e.g., it was difficult to balance health professionals' desire to prescribe advice with the contrasting ambitions of CfE where teachers were offered a broader canvas from which to plan their teaching. There were also problems with defining progression; as the desire to describe experiences and outcomes in generic (and often repetitious) terms led to criticism that they were written in a rather anodyne and unhelpful way. Furthermore, reflecting McLaren's (2013) concerns, there was the issue of assessing HWB, as in many areas it was considered inappropriate for teachers to try and make judgements e.g., on pupils' mental, social and emotional wellbeing. Yet, without determining which areas of HWB it was more or less possible to accurately assess this concern was difficult to progress, so in the end the policy situation became one where all 51 experience and outcome statements remained. Thus, while HWB was largely considered as a good solution to a national problem, there were signs that the formation of policy may contain unintended consequences and difficulties (Hill & Hupe, 2009); Reform Scotland (2013).

### ***Policy legitimization***

Interviewees were keen to legitimize CfE as a positive development in Scottish education. However head teachers, in particular, found some of the policy open-endedness a complex concern. One head teacher noted (HT2, 29/10/14), teachers were so used to prescription it became 'terrible to manage in a school, as outstanding teachers were often beginning to doubt themselves and a happy medium with some exemplars would have helped'. Another stated (HT1, 28/09/14), that to legitimize HWB as a responsibility for all teachers involved moving beyond a curriculum appraisal approach - 'we have gone through audits ... we are sick of audits ...' with another (HT3, 30/10/14) noting that a

greater focus needed on ‘winning hearts and minds’ and of not being consumed by the detail of policy was needed. Making more coherent progress on this basis required dialogue between head teachers and QIS, and shared discussions with teachers on how full engagement with HWB policy would be evident in pupils’ decision making and in their profile of wider achievement. If this happened, HWB would resonate well as an intention, even though most interviewees, especially QI staff (LAQI2, 26/10/14; NQI5, 14/12/14) considered that developments in literacy and numeracy were more clearly understood in terms of their centrality to school culture and effective learning and teaching. As well as concerns over the late arrival (and quality) of support materials many interviewees argued that it would have helped if the SHANARRI and GIRFEC ambitions had been much more closely bound into HWB policy, as this would have allowed there to be a greater focus on positive relationships in schools and between schools, families and the wider community. In pursuing this ambition, there was some concern about emerging professional relationships in schools with there being some disquiet about roles and responsibilities. One academic (TEA1, 29/09/14) was critical of pupil support assistants being given the role of providing support for pupils with complex needs, as the type of unconditional support offered was considered unhelpful in increasing pupils longer term resilience and coping skills – an identified target in policy reporting (Education Scotland, 2013b). Additionally, head teachers reported difficulties in engaging with the Curriculum Impact report and its various Aspects for Development (Education Scotland, 2013b), especially in assessing HWB as many teachers were concerned about making subjective-type judgements. As such, most schools were not formally assessing HWB. In one local authority the plan was that the more objective outcomes in Physical Education and Home Economics were reported on but other areas e.g., mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing were occasionally mentioned in reports but not graded (LAQI1, 29/09/14; LAQI2, 26/10/14). Collectively, variations in the extent to which policies had the approval of interviewees raise doubts about how policy will work in practice.

### ***Policy implementation***

Most interviewees considered that teachers should predominantly focus on general features of HWB e.g., creating positive relationships, showing mutual respect and supporting purposeful learning environments. It was also seen as being in the spirit of CfE when the experiences and outcomes were interpreted at school level and when there was flexibility in how schools took forward developments. These aspirations were generally reflected by QIS who stressed the benefits of a positive school culture which emphasizes shared values and support for pupils' individual needs. Some QI staff (LAQI3, 27/10/14; NQI4, 15/12/14) also advised of the benefits of regularly revisiting key policy documents (e.g., LTS, 2009a; LTS, 2009b) as these were unlikely to have been fully engaged with during the development of CfE. Head teachers were appreciative of QIS even though levels of support have greatly diminished over recent years due to financial cutbacks. As a result, head teachers were using their increased autonomy to build greater links with a range of partners e.g., early intervention staff, health professionals, emergency services employees. Low levels of local authority support did however make it difficult to share good practice and to help schools to review broader connections between HWB and SHANARRI and GIRFEC ambitions. Supporting teachers to take on a more rounded view of HWB was also difficult due to subject demands and teachers perceived lack of expertise and confidence in knowing how to make connections across learning e.g., in terms of increasing pupils' self-esteem, social interaction and engagement in learning conversations (Education Scotland, 2013b).

One head teacher in trying to downplay practice expectations commented that '... we have stopped calling it curriculum for excellence and are just calling it the curriculum ... we have stopped thinking about experiences and outcomes and just think this is what we do' (HT1, 28/09/14). Another head teacher took a contrasting approach and found it necessary at times to 'reverse engineer the curriculum' (HT3, 30/10/14) in order to gain alignment between curriculum specifications (experiences and outcomes), the expectations of Education Scotland and the

workload increases teachers were experiencing. This approach it was argued blended idealism with the practical in trying to support pupils' HWB journey. All head teachers shared concerns about increased teacher workload. This was partially attributed to CfE related increases in lesson planning and time preparing more detailed reports for parents. More significantly though it was ascribed to balancing the requirements of implementing BGE programmes with the new National Qualification (NQ) awards being introduced and developed across the latter three years of secondary schooling (S4-S6, 15-18 years). In many regards these curriculum arrangements were not seen as compatible, with the BGE emphasis on learning processes and skills clashing with the narrower knowledge-led requirements of NQ awards.

Head teachers also reported that they have seen marked increases in the professional expectations of teachers with their being far less acceptance in schools of poorer professional standards. The stronger sense of vocation was evident in the extended opportunities many schools were taking to try and engage pupils in learning throughout their school years (even though there was little formal accreditation in the NQs awards for such endeavors). For example, one head teacher (HT2, 29/10/14) aimed to use HWB to develop leadership across the school through initiating a peer tutoring system. This involved younger pupils (S2-S3, 13-15 years) visiting associated primary schools and helping to support lessons on drugs and alcohol awareness as well sex education and further aspects of personal and social education. In the upper school (S5-S6, 16-18 years) pupils had the opportunity to become a school prefect in either: learning and teaching; school sport or HWB. Those choosing a HWB remit led assemblies and chaired focus group meetings designed to enhance links with community partners e.g., on making improvements to an outside recreational space. They also worked with the school HWB committee to organize weekly health fairs (on themes such as tooth decay, smoking, improving diet). Some schools used tutor time to promote HWB, with most reporting mixed progress in helping spread HWB messages e.g., through simple contexts/tasks such as discussing a word of the day or examining in greater detail over a number of days, more

contentious issues. Variability in progress was often attributed to quality of teacher preparation with more training required in many cases. Despite instances of variability, there were many examples of cooperative and constructive pedagogical approaches becoming more evident in everyday learning and teaching. One head teacher reported that:

When you see good teachers deliver curriculum for excellence it is highly effective learning and teaching and it's what you would always want to see - you see active learning, kids are engaged, learning and teaching success criteria are up on the board, the kids know what they are working towards in terms of experience and outcomes, they see how it relates to their futures, skills are embedded, kids are taking ownership of their learning and organizing tasks and this is the way teaching should be. (HT5, 10/12/14)

Some schools also ran whole school HWB programmes at the timetable changeover period between school years. One school's three day programme (HT2, 29/10/14) articulated closely with the six defined areas of HWB (LTS, 2009b) and was also used for pupils in S1-S3 to complete a Pupil Attitude to Self and School (PASS) psychometric questionnaire. This was based on responses to questions on: feelings about school; perceived learning capability; self-regard; preparedness for learning; attitudes to teachers; general work ethic; confidence in learning; attitude to attendance and response to curriculum demands, with results indicating through a green, amber and red colour scheme areas of relative concern. The school had taken a three year license out for the PASS programme (at cost of approximately £1000 per year) and was using the objective wellbeing evidence as part of their formal reporting to parents as well as sharing findings with partners such as Pupil Support Officers and Educational Psychologists. This innovative approach was used in preference to formally assessing the outcomes specified in policy documents (LTS, 2009b). Taken together, in terms of policy implementation while there was clear evidence of innovative practice

there was also concerns over resources, professional support, staff expertise and confidence. These differences between the expectations of policy making and school-based outcomes (an implementation gap) are a common feature of public policy (Hill & Hupe, 2009).

### ***Policy evaluation***

Head teachers were emboldened by the HWB support they were providing with one commenting that ‘I know in this school the kids that need support and they get it, and that’s the main thing’ (HT1, 28/09/14). However, in more formal terms there was very little specific review of HWB; it was more a general feature of whole school review. Despite this, head teachers did not express particular concerns about how their HWB progress could be defended to Education Scotland and local authority QI staff as part of their school evaluation procedures. What exercised greater concern was the impact of new NQ awards and the delays sending support materials to schools had caused. There was widespread acknowledgement that this had led to implementation regression with the pressures of assessment in the senior school having a backwash effect on the development and progress of HWB across the whole school. One head teacher noted (HT2, 29/10/14), ‘I have one concern and it’s a huge concern and it is that I still think because we are doing all this (i.e., cross curriculum learning and teaching in literacy, numeracy and HWB) that we are in danger of not imparting enough of the knowledge which is still important, as we need to get them through the assessments’ An associated concern voiced by some head teachers (HT4, 06/11/14; HT5, 10/12/15) was that low levels of literacy in pupils entering secondary schools (in part, brought about by the breadth of the BGE curriculum in primary schools) made it difficult and time consuming to make the curriculum as accessible as they wished. Thus, while policy evaluation shows clear signs of desired effects there also exists educational concerns over assessment and the lack of emphasis afforded to knowledge in teaching (Young, 2013).

### ***CfE and HWB futures***

There was a consensus that CfE was a positive development and here for the foreseeable future, and there was certainly no desire for further widespread curriculum reviews. Most interviewees considered that there was a role for local authorities to play in education, notably in terms of supporting local accountability and in looking after vulnerable pupils rather than in necessarily providing leadership. There was good progress reported in many areas, especially in terms of the exciting work happening in schools and communities on positive relationships, a culture of praise and using asset-based approaches to promote schools ethos. It was anticipated that these developments would support pupils' decision-making on leading more active and purposeful lifestyles. There was a consensus that HWB learning and teaching methodologies were becoming more expansive, even though a more fulsome engagement with interdisciplinary pedagogies is still needed (Humes, 2013). More widely however one academic was concerned by the lack of policy boldness in Scotland e.g., as evident by not pricing alcohol more highly, by not banning junk food advertising for children as a consequence of continuing to operate 'halfway between a Scandinavian and a Anglo Saxon neo-liberal model of government' (TEA3, 05/11/14).

## **Conclusion**

While the relatively small scale of the research limits wider generalisations it allows nevertheless a number of key points to be drawn from the findings. With regard to the six central research questions posed, interviewee's thoughts on the CfE policy agenda were consistent with Priestley and Minty's (2013, p. 45) evidence of there being a high level of 'first order engagement' with the main ideas and founding principles of CfE. The degree of interviewee consensus on the merits of CfE lacked the 'bewildering variety' of interpretations Bloomer, (2014, p. 21) reports; indicating that at least as far as HWB as part of CfE is concerned there is relatively little policy contestation. However, this advantage has its downside, as policy formulation was hindered by the big ideas of CfE not being clearly elaborated upon e.g., on the need for teachers to take greater account of local school and community circumstances. This allied with the slowness of response in producing policy

documents led to variable engagement with CfE - from the early adopters through to schools whose approach was more based on 'strategic compliance', curriculum audits and more modest change (Priestley, Minty & Eager, 2014, p. 202).

In terms of policy legitimization there is a shared theoretical and interviewee unease about how CfE is positioned relative to HWB and wider achievement agendas, and of whether the pressures of national examinations will have a backwash effect on pupils BGE. As Bloomer (2014, p. 21) notes by 'opting for examination reform, government ensured that attention would be almost wholly diverted from the lower secondary where the need for change was greater and more urgent.'

Furthermore, the decentralized ideas informing CfE have been insufficiently taken forward by teachers, as evident by Education Scotland (2013b) detailing the multiple aspects of HWB still requiring development. Thus, while many interviewees endorsed Low's (2014, pp. 66-67) concerns that 'the endless demands for plans, data, self-auditing and self-evaluation are sapping the strength out of schools as they feed the needs of local and national governments for facts, figures and signs of conformity' there was also a recognition that teachers needed to be more knowledgeable and confident in order to teach and be responsible for pupils HWB. As such, there is still some way to go before HWB concerns about the development of the whole child connect clearly with CfE ambitions towards modifying 'school provision in terms of increasing participation and retention' (Lingard, 2008, p. 980). These concerns dovetail with Priestley and Minty's (2013) account of teachers' experiencing second order level of engagement difficulties when the scale of the professional and pedagogical changes required becomes apparent. In health and physical education specifically it merges as well with Penney (2013, p. 193) noting that new policy challenges and opportunities **are taking place** within 'a complex network that encompasses many other policy initiatives and agendas'.



In order to address various policy implementation concerns, interviewees reported that many teachers were being squeezed for time and attention by the demands of NQ awards. The emergence of an implementation gap is familiar to many studies of policy and practice, and part of CfE as well (e.g., Priestley et al., 2014). Regression from initial ambitions is also a familiar part of the Scottish educational landscape (see, for example, Raffe, Howieson & Tinklin, 2002; Scottish Government, 2013). Despite these concerns there was often considerable evidence of HWB related self-start ideas happening with head teachers and teachers using their autonomy in ways which reflected a full engagement with the principle of subsidiarity i.e., decisions being taken at the lowest level possible which is consistent with effectiveness (Bloomer, 2014). These various initiatives were described as having a positive influence on school ethos, pupils' view of their own HWB and on constructive interpersonal relationships developing between pupils and between pupils and teachers. However, the potential for a wider engagement with holistic learning approaches has yet to become a strong feature of HWB learning and teaching with the situation matching Priestley et al., (2014) findings that engagement with these approaches has remained modest.

Overall, policy implementation findings broadly reflects the policy enactment situation Ball et al., (2012) found, where there was a mix of 'policy ad-hockery, borrowing, building, re-ordering, displacing, constructing and re-constructing, and patterns of compliance and standardisation ... (combined with) ... a process of complex iterations between policies and across policy ensembles that generate forms of institutional transformation and regeneration' (Ball, 2015, p. 309). In this light further research which identifies how HWB could become a more pivotal part of a learner centred curriculum is needed. This could involve moving beyond the general policy cycles-based approach used in this paper to evaluate the progress of HWB through more detailed and specific issue-based research approaches e.g., rational choice; multiple streams; punctuated equilibrium and/or advocacy coalitions (Hill & Hupe, 2009). For as Cairney (2012) acknowledges, despite the many good points about policy cycles (e.g., their simplicity, logical order and useful starting point),

the cycle model has limitations in terms of its top-down bias and its capacity to be ‘descriptively inaccurate because the stages often run in a different order and it is difficult to distinguish between them’ (p.41).

In evaluating HWB developments as part of a continuing analysis of the distinctiveness of Scottish education and the modernisation of the teaching profession, Humes and Bryce (2013) and Ozga (2005) have referenced progress against the six benchmark propositions outlined by Scotland (1969). The latter three of the propositions make intriguing reading. They are that:

- The training of the intellect should take priority over all the facets of the pupil’s personality
- Experiment is to be attempted only with the greatest caution
- The most important person in the school, no matter what the theorists say, is not the pupil but the (inadequately rewarded) teacher (Scotland, 1969, p. 275).

The evidence from this study is that the first decade of CfE has made a positive contribution towards challenging the last two propositions. There were many examples of experimentation concerns being dusted off and of teachers using more interactive, engaging and expansive learner centred pedagogical approaches to benefit pupils HWB and to engage with wider achievement agendas. The unease remaining is whether the first proposition still stands. In terms of the extent to which CfE might be a policy which is maintained, interviewee evidence concurs with Reform Scotland (2013) and Bloomer (2014) in noting that there is little appetite for further change and instead time to embed changes in practice are sought. However, concerns remain about future PISA results and the coherence between pupils’ BGE and NQ experiences. Conceivably, a fissure might open up between BGE and NQ experiences in ways which are unsettling given Scotland’s pride in comprehensive school education, its investment in learner-centered curriculum and its ongoing

commitment towards improving the life chances of those beset by the debilitating effects of concentrated disadvantage.

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